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Fiftieth Session

6th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 26 September 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral . . . . . (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President *(interpretation from Spanish):* The first speaker this morning is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, His Excellency Don Javier Solana Madariaga, on whom I now call.

Mr. Solana (Spain) *(interpretation from Spanish):* I should like at the outset to convey to you, Sir, my most cordial and sincere congratulations on your election as President of the Assembly. Both Spain, Portugal's sister country, and the European Union, on behalf of which I have the honour to address the Assembly today, are confident that your work will meet with the greatest success. I am firmly convinced that your experience as an eminent professor of international law and your thorough knowledge of international relations will contribute decisively to the Assembly's achieving its ambitious goals.

I should like also to thank Minister Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire for the excellent manner in which he conducted our deliberations during the previous session of the Assembly.

Likewise, I wish to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, together with my congratulations on the work he has accomplished throughout his mandate.

In order to speed up the work of the Assembly, I intend to shorten my statement, the complete text of which will be published in a separate document.

I am addressing this Assembly on behalf of the European Union, whose membership has increased to 15 States since the beginning of this year, thereby reinforcing its capacity to fulfil its commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The European Union, fully aware of the complex challenges faced by the international community, wishes to reiterate its full support for our Organization as a universal forum for realizing humankind's aspirations to peace and security and economic and social progress.

Against this background, the European Council, at its meeting in Cannes on 26 and 27 June, paid tribute, in a solemn declaration, to the work of our Organization and to the half-century's activities of the United Nations.

In a few weeks the Heads of State and Government of the entire world will solemnly commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of our Organization. Although this occasion will give us an opportunity to assess the work accomplished by the Organization over the course of its already long history, we must above all reflect on the best way of preparing the United Nations to meet effectively the challenges facing us at the end of this century. Let me recall, with regard to this moment in the existence of the United Nations, a thought expressed by Jean Monnet in respect of the European Community, when the latter was taking its first steps:

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"This is only a stage towards the forms of organization of the world of tomorrow."

Indeed, the disappearance of old rivalries has not meant the end of conflicts. Today we are witnessing ethnic and nationalistic conflicts and humanitarian crises of frightening proportions; a worsening of economic inequalities; contempt for human rights; the systematic violation of the rules of international humanitarian law; genocide; the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and the alarming deterioration of the environment. These are some of the most serious problems we face today. They affect us all, and we must all make a commitment to solve them.

Although, as usual, a number of issues of concern to the European Union are dealt with in detail in the memorandum distributed as an integral part of this statement, I should like to highlight some questions that are especially important to us: the situation in the former Yugoslavia, developments in Africa and the peace process in the Middle East.

The European Union continues to attach priority importance to reaching a negotiated, just and lasting peace in the conflict that is ravaging the territory of the former Yugoslavia. In this regard, we express our full support for the diplomatic process currently under way and our satisfaction at its initial results at the meeting held in Geneva on 8 September last.

We believe that the United Nations forces in the territories of the former Yugoslavia have played, and continue to play, a fundamental role. Member States of the European Union are among the main troop contributors to these forces. I wish here to pay tribute to the United Nations forces and pay homage to the soldiers who have fallen in the cause of peace, many of them citizens of the European Union.

The European Union has contributed substantially to alleviating the tremendous suffering that the war in the former Yugoslavia, and particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has inflicted upon the population. I wish to express our firm commitment to continue providing humanitarian assistance, both bilaterally and through the relevant United Nations organs and agencies.

After more than three years of bloody conflict, the latest developments in the peace process allow us to look ahead with more hope. In this process, which we hope is near at hand, the European Union intends to play a role commensurate to its commitments in all aspects of the implementation of the peace process, and in particular with regard to reconstruction efforts. Violence has destroyed property, but above all it has taken human lives and destroyed peaceful coexistence. Our main task will thus be to restore hope and offer decent living conditions to those who are still suffering the consequences of this catastrophe.

The European Union is aware of the great challenges facing Africa. Proof of our concern is that we are working to find peaceful solutions to the conflict in Rwanda and to the conflict in Burundi, beginning with the priority problem of the return of refugees. We support the urgent convening of a conference, under United Nations auspices, aimed at peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.

Likewise, we support the initiatives for social and political reconstruction in countries such as Angola and Mozambique, and we welcome the work accomplished by our Organization in Angola, which, following the Lusaka peace agreement, has allowed for the establishment of the third United Nations Angola Verification Mission UNAVEM III.

We also favour a more active role for the Organization of African Unity in the prevention and solution of conflicts in Africa, and we are considering ways of supporting the establishment of effective mechanisms for preventive diplomacy and peace-keeping.

The European Union is also following the spread of and respect for human rights throughout the continent, and we are very much aware of the dire need of some African countries. Since the revision of the Fourth Lomé Convention, the European Union has attached particular relevance to humanitarian and food assistance, and we have made an effort to update our various development cooperation programmes.

The European Union has always strongly supported the peace process in the Middle East, initiated at the 1991 Conference held in Madrid. We warmly welcome the Interim Agreement reached recently by Israel and the Palestinian National Authority, which represents a new and important milestone in this process, and we look forward to the signing of the Agreement this coming Thursday. Likewise, we are confident that in the coming months we will see significant progress in the Syrian and Lebanese negotiating tracks, and that the whole region, which has already suffered enormously, will finally enter

into the dynamics of a comprehensive, just, stable and long-lasting peace.

The European Union attaches paramount importance to the work carried out by our Organization in general, and in particular by the Assembly, in favour of peace in the Middle East. That is why one of our objectives in the session now beginning is to ensure that the various resolutions adopted by the Assembly on the situation in the Middle East contribute directly to the peace process, following the guidelines established in previous years.

I do not wish to conclude this first part of my statement without a reference to the work of the United Nations in Latin America. Its presence in Nicaragua through the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA), the United Nations Observer Mission for the Verification of Electoral Process in Nicaragua (ONUVEN) and the International Commission for Support and Verification allowed for national reconciliation and the holding of elections.

The mediation between the parties and the work of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) led to the historic achievement of ending the long and terrible civil conflict in El Salvador, which culminated in the Chapultepec Agreements of January 1992. Today the presence of the Mission, which has the support of the European Union, contributes effectively to overcoming the obstacles that still persist.

In Haiti, the multinational force and the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) played a fundamental role in the restoration of democracy and in the reconstruction of the country.

In Guatemala, the United Nations role as moderator and the work of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) have brought about substantive agreements on such important issues as human rights, displaced persons and indigenous populations, which we are confident will lead to a speedy solution to the conflict. The participation of international observers in the coming elections in November, supported by the European Union, seems to us an effective formula. All these achievements have been realized with the invaluable help of the various Groups of Friends and the support of the international community.

Conscious of the universality of the challenges that lie ahead for the Organization, the European Union attaches fundamental importance to the adoption of measures allowing for the success and proper functioning of the United Nations in implementing the mandates entrusted to it by the Member States.

In this respect, the Organization's serious financial crisis, unprecedented in its history, seriously endangers the United Nations capacity for action and is a source of great concern for the European Union. Our Organization will become powerless if it does not receive the necessary political support from its Member States and the resources provided by them, particularly through the full, punctual and unconditional payment of their financial contributions, in accordance with the obligations established by the Charter.

Therefore, resolving the Organization's financial crisis is a priority objective for the European Union, which overall is the main contributor, both to the regular budget and to the peace-keeping operations budgets.

This constructive attitude is what led to the participation of the European Union in the work of the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations. Our objective is to reach a consensus as soon as possible — preferably during this session — on the adoption of specific measures to bring about an improvement in the Organization's financial situation.

The European Union wishes to underline the increasingly urgent need to adopt a global package of measures to solve the United Nations grave financial situation. These measures should contemplate, *inter alia*, a possible review of the scale of assessments so that it would reflect as accurately as possible the principle of the capacity to pay, as well as the establishment of incentives and disincentives to encourage all Member States to comply with their financial obligations.

The Agenda for Development (A/48/935), submitted last year by the Secretary-General, identified the five dimensions of development: peace as the foundation, the economy as the engine of progress, the environment as a basis for sustainability, justice as a pillar of society and democracy as good governance.

The European Union attaches the greatest importance to the completion, before the end of the session that is now beginning, of a substantial and

innovative agenda for development, in which it is made clear that peace cannot be built without at the same time promoting the social and economic progress of the poorest people. Through the decisions taken by the European Council held in Cannes, to which I have already referred, the European Union has made clear its determination to contribute yet greater financial resources for development aid, within the framework of both the Lomé Convention — in the case of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries — and through financial cooperation with our Mediterranean partners and friends.

Throughout this session of the Assembly we shall pay special attention to the results of the important cycle of major conferences held over recent years under the aegis of the United Nations for discussion of various subjects linked to development and human progress.

We need the Economic and Social Council to play a more vigorous and more central role within the system; we must ensure that the work of the Assembly and of the Council are complementary, avoiding all duplication.

During this session the results of the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen, will be submitted to the Assembly. The European Union firmly intends actively to consider these results, with a view to identifying appropriate measures to ensure the follow-up and implementation of the commitments undertaken at Copenhagen. We must not allow the platforms of action adopted at United Nations conferences to remain unimplemented.

The Fourth World Conference on Women ended in Beijing only a few days ago. The Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Conference are a step forward, backed by the results of previous United Nations conferences, on the road towards the achievement of equality, development and peace. These objectives were set out in the strategies for the advancement of women adopted in Nairobi 10 years ago.

The European Union has worked actively to achieve consolidation of the results of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights, in the field of human rights and fundamental liberties of women, and of the Cairo Conference on Population and Development. The Platform for Action adopted in Beijing as a result of such concern includes important progress in human rights, notably the right of women to control and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, without coercion, discrimination or violence.

Only three years before the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international community cannot yet be entirely satisfied with the progress achieved. This session will provide us once again with an opportunity to take stock of the situation regarding human rights and fundamental freedoms in the world, two years after the important headway made at the Vienna World Conference.

It is increasingly evident that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms plays a critical role in avoiding potential conflicts. We must therefore acknowledge the value of human rights in preventive diplomacy. Some of the serious conflicts which have recently darkened the international scene are inflicting great suffering on the civilian population, as illustrated by the alarming number of displaced persons and refugees. In this regard, the European Union wishes to reiterate its support for the immense task being performed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in this field. At the same time, we are conscious of the harmful effects of ethnic and religious discrimination on the emergence and development of such conflicts, and we reaffirm our conviction with regard to the need to move further in the adoption of measures to fight racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia.

The level of resources assigned by the Organization to the promotion and protection of human rights — today a mere 1.7 per cent of its regular budget — continues to be totally inadequate. A significant increase in those resources would have a positive impact on related areas, especially on activities designed to assist development. It is increasingly clear that development, human rights and democracy are interlinked, as was stated in the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development.

Furthermore, the European Union attaches great importance to the role and activities of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and wishes once again to draw the Assembly's attention to the pressing need to provide that Office with the human and financial resources required for the proper accomplishment of its tasks. We likewise support the Organization's efforts to enhance the role and functions of the Centre for Human Rights in Geneva, under the supervision of the High Commissioner.

The International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia and the International Tribunal for Rwanda are essential factors in the struggle against the impunity of those who violate human rights. The experience of these ad hoc tribunals will undoubtedly help the work of a future international criminal court, for which a draft statute was drawn up by the International Law Commission and submitted to the Assembly's Sixth Committee at its last session.

Mankind is facing a growing number of humanitarian emergencies that require an effective response from the international community in order to alleviate the tragedy being suffered daily by tens of thousands of human beings. The establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has been an outstanding contribution to the international efforts for humanitarian assistance, a field in which the often hazardous work of non-governmental organizations is also of paramount importance. We deem it essential to implement the decision taken this year by the Economic and Social Council on the need to review and reinforce the capacity of the United Nations system in the area of humanitarian assistance.

There is a need to enhance cooperation between all organizations and people, in such a way that their respective contributions may be mutually complemented and strengthened, duplication of work avoided, and a humanitarian continuum ensured.

We have witnessed important events this year in the field of the environment and in the implementation of the Rio agreements of 1992. Special mention should be made of the positive outcome of the Conferences of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the framework Convention on Climate Change, the opening for signature of the Convention to Combat Desertification, and the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests under the aegis of the Commission for Sustainable Development. We welcome those developments and reiterate our determination to continue working, within the Organization, towards greater cooperation in the field of the environment.

The United Nations Charter confers upon the Organization the principal task of maintaining international peace and security and entrusts that major responsibility to the Security Council.

The Security Council must continue to be the decision-making centre for issues that affect world security and must constantly adapt to currently existing situations in order to strengthen the mechanisms set forth in the Charter itself.

The Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council continued its work during previous sessions of the Assembly. The members of the European Union participated actively in that work, and will continue to do so in the future.

The European Union holds the view that peace-keeping operations and missions of preventive diplomacy are and should continue to be the focal point of the Security Council's action in favour of world peace and security. We welcome the updating of the Agenda for Peace submitted by the Secretary-General at the beginning of this year.

I would remind the Assembly of the European Union's commitment to United Nations peace-keeping operations, illustrated by the fact that the Union as a whole is not only the main financial contributor to these operations, providing 37 per cent of the total budget, but also the main provider of personnel. The European Union stands firmly behind this substantial commitment to the Organization's peace-keeping endeavours. We have all suffered heavy casualties in these operations, and it is of the utmost importance that every possible step be taken to ensure the safety of United Nations personnel in peace-keeping missions.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in peace-keeping endeavours should continue to be explored to optimize the use of material and human resources and to put the mandates entrusted to those missions into practice in the quickest, most efficient and successful way. As an example of the activity of the regional organizations in this field, let me mention that on our continent the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has already developed a mechanism, still at an embryonic stage, for preventive diplomacy, the establishment of confidence-building measures and the resolution of conflicts. Acting on an initiative of the European Union, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) decided at the Budapest Summit last year to reinforce cooperation with the United Nations and with the trans-Atlantic organizations.

Furthermore, the European Union is studying with interest the proposal for stand-by arrangements. To that end, the Union supports the proposals for headquarters of a permanent nature, as well as for the United Nations stand-by forces system, and we are studying with interest other proposals which aim at improving the rapid reaction capability of the United Nations with a view to shortening the period for establishing a peace operation and facilitating its subsequent deployment.

The European Union welcomes the great step forward recently taken within our Organization by the decision to extend the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) indefinitely. This is fundamental progress in the entire disarmament process and the pursuit of nuclear non-proliferation. The decision adopted and the strengthening of the inspection procedure and the principles and objectives of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation constitute an enormous step in the right direction. We also welcome the steady pace of the negotiations for a comprehensive test-ban treaty, which the European Union hopes and is confident will be concluded in 1996 at the latest.

We must now focus our efforts on the universalization of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The European Union invites all States that have not yet done so to become signatories of the NPT. Another European Union priority in the field of nuclear disarmament is the finalization of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons and explosives. The European Union regrets that the Conference on Disarmament has not yet been able to set up an ad hoc committee to begin negotiations on this issue.

Once again, we appeal to all States that signed the Convention of the Banning of the Development, Production, Storage and Use of Chemical Weapons and their Destruction to proceed to ratify it so that it may come into force as soon as possible.

Furthermore, the control and limitation of the use of certain conventional weapons is also cause for concern for the European Union. Through its common action, the Union aims to continue to encourage the activities of the United Nations in its fight against the devastating effects of anti-personnel mines in many territories around the world. Also in the field of conventional disarmament, we will pay special attention to the results of the Review Conference of the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects, in order to render it more effective and to widen its scope.

We believe in the United Nations. We believe in the universality, binding character and supremacy of international law, which is the result of the development of relations among nations and consensus among peoples. The European Union gives its unconditional support to the Organization's ideals and actions.

We are sure that these first 50 years are but the first stage in an unprecedented task that presents no other alternative, given that its chief goal — that of assuring that we all live together in peace, as well as the comprehensive development of human beings — can be attained only through disinterested cooperation among peoples.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Andrei Kozyrev.

Mr. Kozyrev (Russian Federation) *(interpretation from Russian):* First of all, allow me to congratulate my colleague, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, Professor Diogo Freitas Do Amaral, on the occasion of his election to the high post of the President of the General Assembly.

Each of the 50 sessions of the General Assembly has been a step for the international community on a difficult road in search of peace within itself, for the strengthening of the indispensable role of the United Nations. The current session will be marked as the anniversary session by the addresses to be made by the Heads of State and Government in late October. Russia's views on the prospects and difficulties of establishing partnership in a multi-polar and interdependent world — and it is with equal partnership that we link our national and state interests — will be stated by the Head of the Russian State, President Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin.

If half a century of experience of the United Nations teaches us anything, it teaches us first of all that only the equality of States and respect for the diversity of cultures, religions and national traditions can serve as the basis for security and prosperity in the modern world. But the formula "unity in diversity" also presupposes everyone's compliance with fundamental principles of international law and order, respect for human rights and the

promotion of economic progress. This is the essence of the United Nations Charter, which identifies both common ideals and goals and equal rights and obligations for all States without "double standards".

They say that generals always prepare for the last war. Politicians and diplomats have no right to prepare for the last peace. On the contrary, it is necessary to avoid slipping back into a bloc mentality and dividing countries into "friends and foes", whether in politics or in economics.

We can indeed make the next 50 years an era of the United Nations if we accept as its basis the indivisibility of international security and sustainable social and economic development for all.

This question becomes more and more acute against the background of humanitarian disasters in Africa and other regions of the "third world", and the social price of the initial stage of reforms in the post-socialist countries. No one will be able to hide from global problems behind dividing lines of national egotism and economic discrimination, or even expanding military alliances. Such things will not rein in, but rather spur on the spread of international terrorism and drugs, and whip up the flames of local conflicts and the arms race.

One of the principles of the "Agenda for Development" which is being formulated now should be the early elimination of the remaining discriminatory restrictions in the world economy, trade and technology transfer. In particular, Russia, which is successfully implementing unparalleled reforms, should be recognized as an equal trade and economic partner with an economy in transition.

Such a strategy should also provide for the promotion of the economic rehabilitation of countries and regions affected by armed conflicts. The United Nations, its specialized agencies and Member States should immediately begin to address directly the problem of the economic rehabilitation of Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia as a whole, whose peoples have suffered from war and economic sanctions that have been in effect for too long. Russia is ready to take an active part in these efforts, and we do and will continue to contribute substantially to a political settlement. The real chances for such a settlement should not be sacrificed to power or unilateral approaches.

The international community should make equally great efforts to achieve progress in all aspects of the peace process in the Middle East and the post-conflict rehabilitation of all States of that region. We congratulate Israel and the Palestinians on the occasion of their reaching an agreement in Taba, whose official signing ceremony will take place on 28 September next in Washington under the chairmanship of President Clinton. We intend to continue our joint efforts with the United States and to make our contribution to the coming Amman summit conference.

Europe needs a new model of general and comprehensive security, without double standards or dividing lines.

International dialogue on this issue is already under way. I believe that the active involvement of the United Nations and its specialized agencies is necessary to the efforts aimed at the development of this model. Incidentally, the General Assembly was born in the Old World.

A new approach is required to disarmament issues in Europe. On the basis of the implementation of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (certainly taking into account new realities) as early as next spring we should arrive at new major agreements based on the unity of the vital security interests of the peoples of the continent instead of the bloc logic of the past.

Our proposal to all nuclear-weapon States to elaborate a treaty on nuclear safety and strategic stability has become even more timely.

The indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty establishes favourable conditions for this. Our common task is to create the necessary political conditions for those States that have not already done so to accede to it as non-nuclear States. We consider it necessary, as a matter of priority, to conclude as soon as possible, but not later than 1996, work on the comprehensive test-ban treaty. From this rostrum, Russia calls for a universal and permanent moratorium on nuclear tests.

The summit of the "Political Eight" on nuclear safety, which is to be held next spring in Moscow at the initiative of the President of Russia and which was approved in Halifax, will make a major contribution to global stability.

We would like the United Nations to take urgent measures on the prevention of illicit trafficking in light

firearms and the proliferation of anti-personnel mines. It is these "light" firearms that have led to enormous human losses in Rwanda and Angola, Liberia and Bosnia, Tajikistan and Abkhazia. Russia has already introduced a moratorium on the export of the most dangerous types of anti-personnel mines. We urge other States to follow our example.

This issue should be seriously considered in the United Nations Disarmament Commission. While supporting the activities of the Commission, we believe that it should adopt a new agenda corresponding to the current scale of cooperation in the area of security and to new threats and challenges in this field.

The problem of global adherence to a single standard in the area of human rights and basic democratic institutions is very acute. Russia, approaching free, multipartite parliamentary and presidential elections, is making its own contribution to the establishment of these very standards. We invite observers from foreign States and international organizations to attend the forthcoming elections.

It was not so long ago that dozens of agenda items of the General Assembly were devoted to the struggle against apartheid. Now it seems unbelievable that this problem has been solved, owing to a large extent, to the efforts of the United Nations. I sincerely welcome the accomplishments of the people and the Government of South Africa, headed by Nelson Mandela, in the democratization and creation of a free, multiracial society.

But did we manage to overcome the danger of violence arising through fascism, racism, and political and religious extremism? Alas, the answer is far from reassuring. That is why the international community has no right to abandon its efforts in this direction and must not tolerate the emergence of double standards.

The signing of the CIS conventions on human rights and fundamental freedoms and on the rights of national and language minorities was the response of the CIS States to the United Nations recommendations on the creation of a single humanitarian sphere in this part of the world. However, much has yet to be done before a unitary approach to human rights can become a norm of life for, among others, 25 million of our compatriots in some countries of the Commonwealth and the Baltic States. A double standard here is unacceptable.

Russia is interested in the adoption at this session of decisions on such issues as the struggle against racism, all forms of xenophobia and aggressive nationalism, ensuring the rights of minorities and the promotion of democracy and the rule of law in countries in transition. The United Nations should further pursue its policy of qualitative improvement of the international human rights protection machinery, primarily by strengthening its control and preventive functions and enhancing its focus on specific action. The policy of single standards must become an incontestable rule in the sphere of peace-keeping as well. Justice without force is powerless, while force without justice is tyrannical.

There have been many achievements in United Nations peace-keeping efforts. Without the Blue Helmets, the world would be much more dangerous and dozens of conflicts would have been much more bloody. We are proud that approximately 20,000 Russian servicemen are serving as peace-keepers in United Nations and CIS operations.

However, if we want force always to go hand-in-hand with justice in the activities of the United Nations and those who cooperate in them, strict observance of Security Council decisions must be ensured. Here, the Secretary-General and his staff can always count on the support of Russia and, I am confident, of all other Members of the United Nations. The United Nations should be protected from setbacks like that which has occurred in Bosnia.

In general, it is necessary radically to improve United Nations peace-keeping through precision of the criteria and terms of the United Nations involvement in areas of tension; a close linkage between peace-keeping operations and efforts to achieve the peaceful settlement of conflicts; the efficient operation of the whole functional chain — peace-keeping planning, command and control. We are for the earliest possible implementation of the Secretary-General's proposal on the establishment of United Nations reserve forces.

We welcome the conclusion of the Convention on the protection of United Nations personnel, which I signed today on behalf of Russia. This instrument will help to save lives of hundreds of peace-keepers in hot spots of the world.

Peace-making activities undertaken by Russia and its Commonwealth partners contribute to a considerable extent to ensuring regional and international stability. We

appreciate fruitful cooperation with the United Nations in Tajikistan and Georgia. However, the United Nations support of our collective efforts sometimes unfortunately reminds us of a saying: "Too little, too late". Russia, together with its CIS partners, expects the United Nations to make a radical change in its attitude towards peace-making problems in our part of the world.

During the 50 years of the existence of the United Nations, sanctions have been an instrument that the Organization has used to deal with the instigators of conflicts. Now, the time has come to give this instrument a more selective and precise nature. The principal criteria in this regard are: distinct objectives underlying sanctions, advanced coordination of conditions, and mechanisms for lifting them once the objectives are attained.

As a newly elected member of the Executive Council of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Russia intends to make an essential contribution to overcoming a new global crisis, namely the tragedy of millions of refugees. To this end, we intend to seek practical results from the international conference on refugees and migrants within the post-Soviet space.

At this session the General Assembly should give new impetus to collective efforts by the international community in combating crime, illicit drug-trafficking and terrorism. The explosions in Oklahoma and Paris, the taking of hostages in Budennovsk and chemical terrorist attacks in Tokyo — these are bells tolling for us all.

Whatever agenda item we consider, we are convinced time and again that the answers are to be found only on the basis of a single standard: respect for the United Nations Charter and for the purposes and principles of the United Nations that have withstood the severe tests of the past five decades and are lighting the way into the twenty-first century.

The President: I now call on the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, His Excellency the Right Honourable Malcolm Rifkind.

Mr. Rifkind (United Kingdom): May I first congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency in this most important year for the United Nations.

It is nearly half a century since the General Assembly of the United Nations first met, in London. King George VI told the visiting representatives of 50 countries that no more important meeting had ever taken place there. The founders of the United Nations had taken on themselves a heavy responsibility and a noble work.

Today we must pay tribute to those founders and their efforts. Earlier models of collective security had soon crumbled. The League of Nations collapsed after less than two decades. The United Nations has proved more durable. Over 50 years it has helped spread peace in place of war. It has worked to push back hunger and disease and to advance democracy and human rights. Without the United Nations we would have a bleaker world.

I am delighted to add Britain's voice to these celebrations at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. After five decades it is timely to recall what the United Nations has achieved. At the start of a new half-century it is right to weigh the lessons of past experience.

The United Nations is a means to an end. Its value lies not simply in the shared principles and ambitions enshrined in the Charter, but in practical results. Its successes are real.

The United Nations has been a force for peace. From Korea in the 1950s to Kuwait in the 1990s, it has helped check and reverse the tides of aggression. In the Near East and Cyprus, United Nations troops have worked for decades to sustain a measure of stability. In Cambodia the United Nations mounted its most complex operation ever to rebuild a country shattered by 13 years of war. In Mozambique United Nations peace-keepers have helped demobilize 100,000 combatants, allowing democratic elections and the creation of a unified army.

The United Nations has been a source of relief from suffering. Since 1951 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has provided food, shelter, medicine and education for over 30 million refugees. United Nations programmes have immunized 80 per cent of the world's children against disease. United Nations sanitation and nutrition projects have halved child mortality in developing countries.

The United Nations has been a motor for democracy and sustainable development. It has given electoral help to over 40 countries. Its charters and covenants set international standards of human rights. It has brokered agreements to conserve world forests and fish stocks.

The United Nations has done good work for five decades. My country, the United Kingdom, has been at its heart from the start. From the drafting of the Charter, as the first host, in London, of the General Assembly and of the Security Council, we have been a staunch supporter of the United Nations. From the first stirrings of environmental concern in the 1960s, to the fight against AIDS since the 1980s, through to management innovation and financial reform in the 1990s, Britain has been a driving force for the changing agenda of the United Nations. In 1947 we were a party to the first case to come before the International Court of Justice. This year a British judge became the Court's first ever woman member.

Even before the end of the cold war, British forces had served the United Nations cause for decades. For 30 years the United Nations operation in Cyprus has depended on British troops and logistics. In the last five years British forces have served in Kuwait, Cambodia, Rwanda, Angola, Georgia and, of course, Bosnia. Today Britain commits more troops to United Nations peace-keeping than any other Member State — with 10,250 out of a total of 69,000.

Near the end of its first half-century, the end of the cold war opened a new chapter for the United Nations. After years of super-Power stalemate, it again became possible to take effective action in the Security Council, including by authorizing the use of force to reverse aggression. Almost immediately a rash of ethnically based regional disputes began to break out, from the former Yugoslavia in the West to Central Asia in the East.

Early experience brought a sense of exhilaration. When Saddam Hussein made his foolish miscalculation and sought to wipe Kuwait off the map, the United Nations was the means chosen to stop him, and it worked. Talk of a new world order did not seem empty.

Five years on, the record looks more diffuse. The international community could do little to halt disintegration in Somalia or to avert bloody collapse in Rwanda. The wars of secession in the former Yugoslavia have dragged on for four years.

But those who speak of United Nations failure are wrong. The pendulum that swung too far towards euphoria after the Gulf War has swung too far towards despair. Look at the facts.

Alongside the torment of Bosnia and Rwanda are the democratic revolutions that have swept South Africa, South America and Central and Eastern Europe. We live in a post-apartheid world, with a Europe of free nations and the Middle East peace process a reality rather than a slogan. The United Nations has helped bring about peace in Namibia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique and at last, perhaps, in Angola. Even in Bosnia, the real good the United Nations has done has been obscured by unreal expectations. The reality of the past five years is not one of spreading world disorder, but of painstaking, steady efforts to build peace.

Compare this record to the grim setting for the first General Assembly meeting in 1946, when whole regions lay in ruins after five years of world war. The truth is that the history of serious attempts at international cooperation is still quite young. The United Nations is by far its most successful expression. There is today no one country or group of countries ready and able to cope with new world disorder all alone, and since regional instability and economic dislocation affect all our interests, we need a strong and effective United Nations.

This is not to deny the need for change. But it is no good simply blaming the Organization. We, the United Nations Members, must meet our obligations to help improve the system. We have done much in recent years. The United Nations is better able now to plan, mount and conduct missions. Britain and others have seconded military officers to New York to develop the planning and operational capability and funded secondments by other nations. Last year Britain helped launch a new initiative on African peace-keeping. That is bearing fruit now, in United Nations regional training, in closer cooperation between African countries and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Conflict Resolution Mechanism and in products like the Anglo-French Peace-keeping Glossary, developed by the Ghanaian Staff College.

The process of reform must continue. The more seriously the United Nations addresses issues like pre-planning, logistic support and command and control, the more confidence troop contributors will have, the more forces will be put at the disposal of the United Nations and the more effective the operations will be.

Changing procedures is not enough. We must learn to be more realistic in what we ask of the United Nations. That means not setting aspirations we cannot provide the means to meet. Sometimes a declaratory

statement is useful to put the international community's views on record, to underpin a consensus. At other times it may be better for the Security Council to remain silent than to issue unrealistic pronouncements.

Bosnia and Somalia have shown the limits of peace-keeping. They offer a clear lesson. The United Nations is not yet suited to fight wars. Peace enforcement is better left, perhaps, to a coalition of the willing acting under United Nations authority. We must not send in the United Nations to keep a peace which does not exist and then blame the United Nations for failure, nor send it in mandated and equipped to keep the peace and then blame it because it does not enforce the peace.

Whatever the blemishes of recent years, there is greater scope today for effective international action than ever before. The United Nations should be the centre-point of such work. I suggest we should focus greater effort in future on two areas.

First, preventive action is better than cure. Far better than containing or extinguishing a fire is stopping it from igniting. Bosnia is the most tragic example. Today the prospects for peace look a little stronger. I commend the efforts of Dick Holbrooke, supported by the Contact Group, to mediate between the parties, and the agreement reached in Geneva on 8 September. Many hard choices lie ahead for all sides before a final settlement is achieved. But we have made a start. It is vital that all parties seize this chance for peace. Only political negotiations, not military force, can secure that.

But the war has dragged on for three and a half years now. Tens of thousands of people have been killed; millions more have been made homeless. It will take years for the wounds inflicted on that country to heal. Certainly the suffering would have been many times worse without a United Nations presence. When I was in Sarajevo last week, the Bosnian Government told me how much it values the work done by British and other forces to help the people of Bosnia. But how much better for all these people if war had been avoided from the start. Perhaps much of the damage and destruction might have been prevented by closer international attention to the problems and tensions arising from the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s.

We have started to learn that lesson. The early deployment of a small United Nations force in The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has helped to stop conflict from spreading there. Elsewhere the quiet diplomacy of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has helped defuse tension in Ukraine and Albania; has nudged adversaries toward peace talks in Georgia, Moldova and Chechnya. There are few headlines for successes that avert fighting and save lives. But the headlines of war carry a heavy price. Preventive action is a wiser investment.

Many routes exist. Britain and France have sketched out one model: to use the skills of diplomats, of soldiers, of academics and others to defuse tension and promote dialogue. The presence of aid workers, human rights monitors, or United Nations envoys can help contain a brewing crisis; and all credit to the United Nations representative doing that in Burundi. We strongly support the efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to work with the United Nations in preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. The initiative on African peace-keeping will help.

So many different actors can play a part. The crucial point is not who acts but when. Early warning of a crisis and prompt action by the international community are the real key to avoiding further tragedy of the kind we have seen in Bosnia.

My second proposal is for a new approach to peace-building. To provide lasting security requires more than diplomacy and military force. To build real peace we must bridge the gap between our humanitarian work and our long-term development work.

Aid workers have grown used to coping with the debris of war. In the past five years the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has given help to millions fleeing conflict: Rwandans in Tanzania and Zaire, Afghans in Iran and Pakistan, Liberians in Côte d'Ivoire and in Guinea. But too often we treat short-term humanitarian needs in isolation. Huge sums have been spent in humanitarian efforts in Rwanda, for example. But Rwanda's long-term stability depends on rebuilding the structures of society and on civil rights; helping local communities to help themselves, in areas from health and housing through to an effective judiciary.

I suggest that two elements are key to a new approach.

First of all, we must adopt a longer-term perspective in tackling immediate crises. Even when a cease-fire is holding, or elections have taken place, if the framework of society is shaky, a continued international presence can

offer it stability until a government can cope. An abrupt end to a mission, by contrast, can be very destabilizing. In El Salvador, for example, a small human rights team stayed on after the United Nations troops had left, to provide further advice and monitoring. Peace-keepers themselves can help begin the work of reconstruction. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and the aid agencies have been doing that for over a year in central Bosnia, underpinning reconciliation between Muslim and Croat communities by rebuilding roads and hospitals and schools.

I strongly support the thesis of the Secretary-General's recent report: that we must go beyond electoral assistance, to preparing the social and institutional ground in which democracy and civil society can put down firm roots. The task of rebuilding Bosnia could be a model for the future.

Secondly, we need far better coordination in what we do. If funds are to be gathered and used quickly and effectively, donors themselves must make a greater effort to meet their promises of help. Before operations begin, as planning gets under way, the international financial institutions must be involved from the start, as they were in Cambodia. All the actors in the United Nations system must be working together, military and political, humanitarian and development, crossing the traditional boundaries between rival baronies. Such a coalition of interests could plug the gap we see too often now, until the major reconstruction programmes can begin.

Mr. Huaraka (Namibia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

My proposal is to build on these principles in United Nations programmes for stabilization and transition. There are many areas where international expertise can help restore a society; creating judicial systems; training an army; developing a finance ministry or a diplomatic service. To fulfil these needs, we should be prepared to loan our experts to countries emerging from conflict, as Britain's Know-How Fund does for countries in Central and Eastern Europe emerging from communism. United Nations programmes for stabilization and transition could be the greatest contribution we could make to international security.

The demands on the United Nations have grown enormously. To meet them the United Nations needs change at the centre too. I welcome work under way to cut costs and reduce waste in New York. The whole United Nations system must learn from that example. We need better planning and budgeting, an end to fraud and mismanagement. More subcontracting can help, using non-governmental organizations, even private companies, for tasks like mine clearance and logistics in Angola. And there is still too much duplication between the United Nations agencies. Rhetoric is not enough. Reform has to be real, and it has to be soon.

This is not a side issue. It is not a narrow interest. If we are to do the United Nations work effectively — peace-keeping, aid or humanitarian — we must use its resources better. No one, G-7 or G-77, benefits from waste. Recent experience has shown the United Nations is in some ways ill-fitted for its tasks; under-powered in some areas, like peace-keeping and preventive diplomacy; but, however, still bloated in other parts of the system. United Nations Members must pay their dues. But the United Nations must justify those funds, and get the most from them, by hard decisions on duplication and over-staffing, and diverting resources to the top priorities.

Britain supports enlargement of the Security Council to broaden its base without reducing its effectiveness. Permanent membership is the key issue. Permanent members of the Security Council must be both willing and able to make a significant contribution through the United Nations to international security. That is what the Security Council is about. That is what it must remain if it is to be effective. Germany and Japan are playing an increasing part across the range of United Nations business, and are among the top three financial contributors. It is right that they should benefit from an expansion of the permanent membership, with the wider rights that entails, but also with the wider responsibilities to contribute to security and peace-keeping. Broad geographical balance in an enlarged Council also needs to be maintained.

But the United Nations system will never work if we do not fund it properly. The United Nations is on the verge of financial collapse. It is owed over $3.7 billion in unpaid contributions. Troop contributors are owed nearly $1 billion. Last year 39 countries failed to pay at all. The United Kingdom favours tightening of penalties for non-payment, including the charging of interest on late payments. We find unacceptable cross-funding of regular budget deficits from the peace-keeping budget. Perhaps an appropriate policy could best be entitled: No Representation without Taxation!

The financing arrangements must change. Some members pay too much. Others, like the new economic

giants of the developing world, now pay less than they should. We need a scale that is simpler and reflects a country's real capacity to pay, and without the additional anomalies and distortions of the present system. Britain and Sweden have put forward ideas. We need progress soon.

But the problem is not solved by turning the tap off. This year we have all reaffirmed our support for goals and work of the United Nations. But empty words will not pay bills.

The final lesson from the last 50 years may be the most important: the case for a strong, effective United Nations.

In conclusion, may I say that the United Nations today faces a crisis of confidence. United States Congressmen may be the most vocal sceptics. They are not alone. The air of optimism, of a fresh start after the cold war, is overtaken in some quarters by gloom at the instability and fragmentation around us, and pessimism at our ability to cope. This despair is dangerous.

Multilateral action is not an add-on to national policy. It gives wider legitimacy to principles we value, such as human rights and democracy. It spreads the cost of aims we share, such as freeing Kuwait from invasion or restoring democracy in Haiti. It lets us work with others to fight common threats, such as greenhouse-gas emissions or the international drug trade.

The price is not high. The bill for all United Nations peace-keeping, all aid and development work last year, was slightly over 3.5 per cent of the United States' defence budget, or less than the United Kingdom spends on police and public administration. One day of Operation Desert Storm cost as much as all that year's United Nations peace-keeping. The price of disengagement and disorder would be greater. Public support is there. Even in the United States, polls are clear: people support the United Nations, and they support international peace-keeping. We have a duty to our electorates to continue the United Nations work.

It is easy to forget the United Nations successes over 50 years. It is easy to turn away from disorder and chaos. But the world is too small. Crises in distant countries affect us too; our commerce, our citizens overseas, our neighbour's security — ultimately it is our own. It is in our interest to play what part we can to build a more decent world. If the United Nations were not here to help do that, we would have to invent something else.

The experience of five decades offers lessons for the future. I know the Secretary-General is committed to change. Getting the United Nations we need for the twenty-first century requires the support and participation of all Member States. The United Kingdom has played a full part in the United Nations for 50 years, and we will continue to do so.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Chairman of the delegation of Bangladesh, His Excellency Mr. Reaz Rahman. I now call on him.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): I have the honour to make the following statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. A. S. M. Mostafizur Rahman, the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, who, though present in New York, is unable to attend this Assembly for reasons of health.

> "I warmly congratulate Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral on his unanimous election as President of this historic fiftieth anniversary session of the United Nations General Assembly. His election is a tribute, not only to him personally, but to his great country, Portugal. I am confident that he will do great honour to the legacy of his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire, to whom we owe deep appreciation, not least for his sponsorship of the establishment, on 14 September, of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the strengthening of the United Nations system.
>
> "Let me also commend our Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his dedicated and untiring efforts to promote the effectiveness of this world body.
>
> "In this fiftieth anniversary year, the United Nations has reached a critical turning-point in appraising its past and in charting a viable course for its future, based on the renewed commitment, trust and consensus of its Member States.
>
> "The world of today is obviously quite different from that of 1945. Then, the United Nations, in the wake of the devastating global conflagration that was the Second World War, was called upon
>
> 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war'.

In the wake of the cold war, the United Nations is now called upon to consolidate and secure an uncertain and amorphous peace.

"The end of the cold war had fuelled hopes that the United Nations, freed from nuclear and ideological confrontation, would devote its full attention to building a peaceful and more equitable world; tackle the challenge of world poverty; advance regional conflicts to resolution; distribute the benefits of peace dividends; and move towards fulfilling the unrealized premises of the Charter, especially with regard to collective security.

"These hopes were belied. The world of the 1990s is more dangerous in many ways than the cold-war era. There is greater tension in more places, a further degradation in the quality of life and many more complex issues of law and ethics, management and practical cooperation. Negative impulses have assumed a variety of dimensions within States, between groups of States and globally.

"Within States, nations have come under siege from multiple threats, retarding their capacity to act effectively or independently. Political instability has fuelled an economic breakdown, and economic backwardness has created political upheaval in a never-ending vicious circle. Long-suppressed national, ethnic and cultural rivalries have resurfaced, unleashing bigotry, extremism and violence. They have generated powerful centrifugal forces that have not only threatened to but actually breached established boundaries. Demagogues, political separatists and fringe groups are being encouraged and supported by external forces to challenge the legitimacy of Governments and their capacity to govern.

"On another plane, fears are surfacing that the bipolar world of the past 50 years could now assume a North-South configuration, not between opposing political and social systems, but between rich and poor nations. Anxiety is increasing in the South that their interests are being marginalized; that development resources are being diverted or are dwindling; that their potential to act as partners in revitalizing the world economy is being ignored; and that new constraints and conditionalities are being selectively imposed.

"Globally, new forces are emerging that no State acting alone can control but which threaten the legitimacy of all States. Pollution, eco-damage, devastating diseases, speculative dealers and money-launderers, organized crime, arms smugglers and terrorists have eaten into all societies, vitiated values and crippled development. Rapid technological and transnational processes are reducing the ability of States to act on their own or to regulate domestic policies affecting the movement of goods, services, labour and capital. Tensions over resources are a case in point. Forty per cent of the world's population live on the banks of rivers or lakes shared by two or more countries. Dams and irrigation projects cause serious tension and actual conflict.

"Ironically, at a time when the United Nations is in greater demand then ever before and its capacity stretched to the limit, a serious campaign of vilification has been launched against it. It has been charged with mismanagement, inefficiency, corruption, excessive costs and over-staffing. Its growing membership, in the wake of decolonization, has been termed irresponsible, obstructive and divisive, and it has been accused of indiscriminately exercising the so-called 'tyranny of the majority'. This tarnished image, propagated by a few but rejected by many, has left deep scars that have diminished the United Nations.

"It is against this background that I now turn to some of the priority concerns facing Bangladesh.

"First and foremost is the financial crisis that threatens to undermine the United Nations. The Secretary-General has declared that the United Nations is already technically bankrupt. The financial situation has to be placed on an adequate and sustainable footing and its deterioration urgently reversed.

"Bangladesh has consistently held that the current financial difficulties were primarily a cash-flow imbalance due mainly to the failure by some Member States, in particular some major contributors, to fulfil their Charter obligations in full and on time. These Member States must give practical effect to their commitment to the United Nations by paying their assessed contribution in full and on time, including all arrears. Capacity to pay remains the fundamental tenet in determining

Member States' contributions. To proceed on the basis that simply a revision of the scales of assessment would provide a panacea to all financial ills is simplistic and misleading. It will neither change the aggregate amount of revenues available to the United Nations nor guarantee better cash flows or prompt payment. While it is likely that for some time to come the bulk of United Nations revenues will come from assessments and voluntary contributions, Bangladesh supports exploring the possibility of providing independent revenue sources for the United Nations through various international transactions and taxation.

"Bangladesh supports the reform efforts that have been initiated to revitalize and restructure the main organs of the United Nations and to achieve a more dynamic interrelationship for them. We intend to participate actively and constructively in the open-ended, high-level Working Group on United Nations reform which is to review the Secretary-General's Agendas for Peace and Development, respectively, and the report submitted by Member States and independent commissions. While we support the idea that the broad objective of the reform is to strengthen the response and efficiency of the United Nations system in promoting the goals of development, security, justice and equality and to improve accountability and responsibility, we reject pursuit of reforms of a purely mechanical or managerial nature. It seems ironic that the yardstick for determining what should or should not be pruned has been applied selectively in the past, with peace-keeping operations approved by the Security Council proliferating at the cost of development programmes. Catchwords of cost-effectiveness, financial stringency, trimming management, redundancy, waste and inefficiency seem intended more to constrain control and reduce the United Nations role than improve its capability of responding to the needs of the international community.

"Our position with regard to Security Council reform has concentrated more on strengthening the transparency and efficiency of the Council's mandate than on enlargement of the permanent membership. While we fully support enlargement of the overall size of the Council to reflect the growth in membership of the United Nations, we believe that an increase in permanent members should be considered only on the basis of the most stringent criteria, and on the basis of global recognition and consensus. We are opposed in principle to creating new centres of privilege or distinctions that can distort the principle of sovereign equality.

"Bangladesh welcomes the consensus achieved in the outcomes of the major conferences in Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing on population, social development and women, which supplement the results of the Earth Summit, the children's Summit and the Vienna Conference on Human Rights. Together they have forged a meaningful and comprehensive social agenda that has reinforced poverty eradication and people-centred sustainable development. It must be emphasized, however, that social development is dependent on economic growth, which can be fuelled only in an international economic environment which is conducive to it.

"The global society is only as strong as its weakest link. The plight of the least developed countries assumes special relevance and importance in this 1995 mid-term review year of the least developed countries' Programme of Action for the 1990s. Their continuing crises calls for immediate remedial action especially in increasing official development assistance, writing off debts and assuring greater trade access on preferential terms.

"Bangladesh has followed closely and supports strongly the evolution and development of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Peace. We agree with the priority emphasis that has been placed on preventive diplomacy and conflict-prevention measures and recognize especially their cost-effectiveness. We believe that regional efforts and regional agencies should be utilized more frequently and their capacity strengthened. Bangladesh has actively contributed to the peace-keeping mission of the United Nations and has always favourably responded in providing troops. We have closely examined and positively responded to the request for the provision of stand-by troops. We are also favourably inclined to support a rapid-reaction capability for providing humanitarian assistance.

"At plenary meetings the General Assembly will have occasion to address in greater depth some of the most pressing and critical political issues on the agenda, including the ongoing conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which prospects for a negotiated solution have considerably brightened on

the basis of the Contact Group's Peace Plan and the Geneva Declaration of Principles of 8 September 1995; the continuing peace efforts in the Middle East and the new interim agreement between Israel and Palestinian leaders as a follow-up to the Oslo Agreement; the status of democracy and human rights in Haiti; and the review of the work of international tribunals established in former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda. Given the fluidity and rapid evolution of events in some of these crises, it is our hope to comment on them at length during consideration of the specific item.

"Let me say in conclusion that there is no doubt in our mind that the United Nations remains the only forum where we can meet the challenges of the future by drawing upon our combined solidarity and willingness to confront them together. Bangladesh reaffirms its firm and unwavering commitment to this world body and the pursuit of its great goals."

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Her Excellency Miss Tarja Kaarina Halonen.

Miss Halonen (Finland): Let me begin by congratulating Mr. Freitas do Amaral of Portugal on his election to the presidency of this fiftieth session of the General Assembly. I am confident that under his wise leadership we shall come to a successful conclusion of this historic session.

My Spanish colleague, Minister Javier Solana, has already spoken on behalf of the European Union. I fully associate Finland with his statement.

Fifty years ago the founders of the United Nations established the maintenance of international peace and security as the primary purpose of their new Organization. They also undertook to take effective collective measures to that end. Fifty years later the condition of the world is dramatically different, but the United Nations is as indispensable now as it was then. Its role under Chapter VII of the Charter continues to be a vital bulwark of world security, but its mission of peace now ranges much wider: the United Nations focuses on prevention of conflicts, it sustains development, it seeks to ensure the human rights and dignity of every individual.

The world needs a strong United Nations. Certainly the small, the weak and the underprivileged among us need the United Nations the most. But the United Nations, in turn, needs the full support of all its Member States.

It is intolerable that while all of us here will once again reaffirm our faith in the United Nations, the Organization is once more experiencing extreme financial difficulties. In this context I should like to draw the attention of the Assembly to a statement adopted yesterday by the Foreign Ministers of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland — on the financial situation of the United Nations. The text of this statement will be made available later.

We all agree that the United Nations needs to streamline its work, set clear priorities and cut out activities that have become obsolete. Yet the main reason for the difficulties is that the majority of the Member States, permanent members of the Security Council among them, do not pay their assessed contributions on time, in full or without conditions.

As a consequence, those who pay on time, in full and without conditions — such as Finland — are in fact penalized for their behaviour. It is high time for all Member States to acknowledge that to pay one's dues is not an option, but an obligation, and that this obligation must be fulfilled, and fulfilled punctually. When payments are not made on time, it is normal to charge interest. This should be done also in the United Nations.

It is also clear that the present scale of assessments needs to be revised rapidly to take into account the real capacity to pay of each Member State. Finland is prepared to support adjustments in cases where the pains of transition, natural disasters or other circumstances truly beyond the control of the Government concerned justify such exceptional treatment. On the other hand, upward adjustments should be the rule when economic development justifies them.

A strong United Nations needs an effective Security Council, capable of acting on behalf of the entire membership. Finland is pleased that the Security Council has assumed its role under the Charter after the paralysis of the cold-war years. We also welcome the steps the Council has taken to improve its working methods and the transparency of its deliberations.

To remain effective in the long run, the Security Council must be representative. There can be no effectiveness without legitimacy. Legitimacy grows from

a true reflection of the increase in United Nations membership as well as from a frank recognition of changing realities. Finland therefore supports an increase in Council membership by five to eight new members.

The groundwork for the reform of the Council has been laid after two years of intensive debate in the Working Group of the General Assembly. Now it is time to move from discussion to true negotiation between Member States.

A strong United Nations does not mean that our Organization should do what we, as Member States, should in the first instance do ourselves. Under the Charter, Member States themselves have an obligation to seek peaceful solutions to disputes and to make every effort to prevent conflicts in advance. The United Nations assists, but cannot replace, the Member States, nor should it be expected to do so.

The permanence of, and unfailing respect for, universal norms is the basis of human security, whether in relations between nations or within the nations themselves.

The historic decision by the parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to make that Treaty permanent meant that a cornerstone of international security was kept in place and that the prospect of the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons became more attainable. The next step should be the conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty by the summer of 1996. The negotiations in Geneva are proceeding well. Under these circumstances, any testing is therefore a cause for concern. Finland has expressed its disapproval of the recent tests by France and China.

The President returned to the Chair.

The breakthrough achieved in the Middle East peace process two years ago will be followed by a new important agreement, to be signed this week. I should like to congratulate the negotiators on their courage and persistence. The international community should continue to support the reconstruction that peace has made possible.

Finland is encouraged by the recent turn towards a peaceful solution in the former Yugoslavia. The international community has shown resolve in defending Sarajevo from persistent and cruel attacks on innocent civilians. The international community must show equal resolve once the peace agreement is reached. It must help to maintain peace on the ground and to reconstruct what has been shattered by war. But, above all, it is necessary that all parties to the conflict now finally commit themselves to peace.

Some of the lessons from the conflicts in former Yugoslavia and elsewhere are clear. The capacity of the United Nations and the international community to coordinate an international response is still inadequate and not integrated enough, as so many speakers before me have already mentioned here. The United Nations bears the main responsibility to prevent, to react rapidly to and to manage often very complex emergencies. It is the central actor in peace-keeping operations. We must not allow the lack of financial resources and organizational difficulties to stand in the way.

A continuum of ideas based on a broad concept of security — from respect for the rule of law and human rights to support for sustainable economic and social development — is already available in the Secretary-General's twin Agendas for Peace and for Development. It is now for the Member States to put the best of those ideas into practice. Finland, together with its European Union partners, will do its share.

True international security begins with the security of the individual, sometimes in relation to his or her own Government. Violations of human rights, including women's rights, are not justifiable on any grounds. There are no cultural exceptions to universal human rights.

The importance of mechanisms for the effective protection of human rights is now widely recognized. This is manifested, *inter alia*, in the efforts to establish systematic and organized judicial inquiry into, and penalties against, violations of international humanitarian law and human rights. Finland supports the early establishment of a permanent international criminal court.

In addition to judicial mechanisms open mainly to States, the question of the right of individuals to rely on international human rights instruments is worthy of serious study and development. The very positive experiences gained during the 45 years that the European Court of Human Rights of the Council of Europe has been functioning illustrate the merits of this approach to human rights. I can speak to that.

The Beijing Conference and other recent United Nations Conferences — Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen — need active and integrated follow-up throughout the United Nations system. The platforms are there. They

have established beyond doubt that sustainable human development and human security can be realized only through the empowerment of individuals and a strong civic society under law. In the international follow-up of the Beijing Conference, the roles of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council are crucial, not only for the efficient implementation of the Platform for Action, but also for strengthening the Organization in the social and economic fields. At the same time, action at the grass-roots level — not new bureaucratic superstructures — is what is now required.

The follow-up to the Rio Conference offers some encouragement. Environmental concerns are now part of mainstream thinking on development. As a major forestry nation, Finland wants in particular to make sure that progress on forest issues is made in a solid and balanced manner and on a global scale.

The past five decades have demonstrated to the world that the United Nations is a vital centre for harmonizing actions for the common good. The future will bring new challenges. Let us provide the United Nations with the political support and the financial means that it desperately needs to serve us for the future.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, His Excellency Mr. Muhamed Sacirbey.

Mr. Sacirbey (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, and wish you success in your new, most historically significant task.

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations can be viewed as a time of retirement or as an opportunity for a new beginning and rejuvenation. We all bear a responsibility to maximize the possibility that the United Nations will not only endure the next 50 years but will thrive as the centrepiece of a new world order and international peace and security.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is keenly aware of the pivotal role into which our country has been thrust. It is not a role we sought or one that we cherish. The successful settlement of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, consistent with the principles of sovereignty, democracy and respect for human rights engraved in the United Nations Charter, can be a catalyst for this new beginning for both Bosnia and Herzegovina and the United Nations. However, a failure to honour basic principles of the United Nations Charter and international humanitarian law could be fatal to Bosnia and Herzegovina and threaten the vitality and integrity of the United Nations.

This coming Thursday, we all hope to see another firm stride towards peace in the Middle East. Although much more needs to be done to secure the rights of all in the region and to bring about real stability and therefore true peace, the peace process in the Middle East is anchored by leaders who deserve our respect. They represent peoples who have been long maligned during the recent past. The substantial differences that still exist between these peoples are born out of previous injustices and out of conflicting claims to land.

The war waged upon our country does involve a land grab and an aggression in violation of the United Nations Charter. However, more directly, the war is about ideology — ideology not of religion and ethnicity but of politics and tolerance. We have been the victims of genocide and our enemy is not defined by its ethnicity or religion but by the ideology of intolerance, dictatorship and fascism that it promotes.

I have just come out of the negotiations with the members of the Contact Group on Bosnia and Herzegovina and my two colleagues from Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro. I wish that I could say that I was as confident about the prospects of success with respect to our negotiations as I am for the prospects of the negotiations in the Middle East. While the Middle East negotiations involve statesmen trying to resolve the competing claims of maligned peoples hungry for peace, we find among our negotiating partners at least two individuals already indicted by the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague for genocide and other crimes against humanity. While the international media show pictures of the mass graves of civilians murdered in the campaign of "ethnic cleansing" and genocide that gave the Republika Srpska its very beginning, we are now negotiating with a team that includes the very indicted war criminals responsible for these murders and the mass graves.

We really do hope that this negotiating process will bring about a step towards peace. We have come to the firm understanding that victory can be defined in more than one way. We are not seeking military victory over our enemies, even though our legal and moral status is consistent with absolute military triumph. We have learned to define our victory in terms of the lives that we can save and in the opportunity to rebuild and reinstate throughout our country democracy and human rights. We certainly do not seek revenge for the thousands of

persons expelled, tortured, raped and murdered. We only seek not to allow war criminals responsible for these crimes to dictate our future and to seek legitimacy through the negotiating process. We do have confidence that the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague will bring about justice and will certainly know better how to address such war criminals than the negotiators.

We are sincerely committed to, and do believe in, the negotiating process. Negotiations are consistent with our goal, which is to achieve peace, even if we have to make difficult, painful compromises. Through peace we hope to re-establish democracy and respect for human rights throughout the entire country and in that fashion gradually reintegrate our country. It is in many ways a risky and unprecedented road. None the less, we do believe that, in peace, the ideology of an open, free, democratic and tolerant society is strongest, while a closed, totalitarian and intolerant ideology is strengthened by conflict. We do recognize also that there are some legitimate considerations that have to be addressed in the negotiating process, including internal territorial delineations and means to rebuild the confidence of the population in the political processes and mechanisms that are designed to secure respect for human rights.

Our country has been too scarred and too polarized by this war for us to expect that peace and reintegration will not require a special effort and mechanisms that may seem unnatural to many of us. None the less, there still remains a basic contradiction in the existing negotiating process. That is because it is theorized that dictators and despots as negotiators on one side are truly prepared to negotiate to bring about free and fair elections and democratic institutions as the basis for a new Bosnia and Herzegovina.

That is because it is expected that hate mongers on one side are prepared to negotiate the establishment of institutions that in fact ensure respect for basic human rights.

That is because war criminals on one side — the same side — are called upon to negotiate the creation of mechanisms that would facilitate the return of refugees and displaced persons, the very victims that these criminals actually subjected to "ethnic cleansing".

I have just come from a set of lengthy and difficult negotiations. The other side continues to refuse to accept the requirement that the future Parliament and Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be elected by direct elections by popular vote.

We are being strongly encouraged — even pressured, if you will — to agree to what may be a process other than election by popular vote as the means by which the future Parliament and Presidency of our country would be selected.

We have already been lectured that the negotiating process would collapse if we persisted in demanding that the extradition of war criminals to The Hague must be honoured by all authorities within the future Bosnia and Herzegovina, as is consistent with international law and the demands of the international community on our country as a whole.

Let us be clear here once and for all on this. We will not settle for sham elections or other selection procedures in respect of our most basic governmental institutions that dictators and despots want in order to undermine real democracy and legitimize totalitarianism under the cover of an international peace agreement.

The other side has been given the opportunity to choose its own negotiating team. But the fact that they have selected members who have already been formally indicted by the War Crimes Tribunal and others who may yet be indicted will not affect our demand that they be extradited to the Tribunal.

The selection of these negotiators is their choice. But let me emphasize once again: we will not allow a negotiating process to shield war criminals from international justice — not our justice, but international justice. In fact, the success of the negotiating process will be measured by whether or not war criminals are brought to justice and by whether despots and dictators are swept out of power, not by the agreements that such criminals and dictators may sign.

Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be either free, fair or democratic until a basic respect for human rights is established, until war criminals are sent for trial to the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, until refugees and displaced persons are guaranteed the right and opportunity to return and to vote in these elections, and until overall conditions are established consistent with a free and open society.

Finally, neither can there be real peace unless an environment consistent with democracy and respect for human rights is promoted by all, including the international community.

Well, what does all this have to do with the United Nations? It certainly has a lot to do with Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Member of the United Nations. Simply put, the United Nations Charter and basic international principles can be overlooked only temporarily. However, the United Nations cannot be the envisioned authority in the preservation of international peace and security if the United Nations Charter is overwhelmingly ignored in establishing the building blocks for peace. This is a universal principle with global application.

As I mentioned, I have just come from the negotiations. I will be going back. We are surprised, we are angry that we have to negotiate over whether or not, in establishing peace and a new beginning in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the other side will be forced to accept direct, free and democratic elections. We are being told that we must accept compromise language that means less than this. If they will not accept the words today, we must be truly suspicious of their longer-term intentions ever to accept real peace and democracy, or whether they in fact just intend to perpetuate their hold on power and domination over an innocent Serb population.

We have already made many painful compromises. We are prepared to make more — many more — in the search for a real peace. However, do not ask us — do not ask yourselves — to settle for concessions to dictatorships, to intolerance, to illegality, to criminality and hate. Do not allow yourselves and us to set aside the most basic principles of the United Nations Charter.

We are prepared to work with all Member States in partnership for that real peace and the necessary compromises that all of us can live with.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, His Excellency Mr. Vahan Papazian.

Mr. Papazian (Armenia): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of this historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly. Given your talent and experience, I am confident that you will guide this session to the successful completion of the noble mission entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations.

I should also like to express my appreciation and thanks to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, for his outstanding leadership in accomplishing the tasks of the last session.

I should like to take this opportunity to extend my warm welcome and congratulations to the Republic of Palau on its admission to the United Nations during the past year.

Further, I wish to express Armenia's gratitude to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the vision with which he has guided the Organization, and for his tireless activity in redefining the role of the United Nations in this changing world.

After its declaration of independence in 1991, Armenia began implementing radical economic and political reforms to create a healthy market economy and a truly democratic society. In addition to severe economic and social problems resulting from the extraordinary changes buffeting the country, the transition process in Armenia has been exacerbated by the collapse of traditional economic and trade arrangements, instability in the region, the transport and energy blockade imposed by neighbouring Azerbaijan, the devastation caused by the massive earthquake of 1988, the conflict between Nagorny Karabakh and Azerbaijan and the presence of 360,000 refugees.

Despite such serious economic and social circumstances, economic reforms have been continued and even expanded over the last year. From the point of view of current economic trends, 1994 was exceptional. The programme of socio-economic development was aimed at halting economic decline, reducing inflation and creating conditions for the revitalization of the economy. Although the problems specifically related to the transition remain, the measures taken not only have halted the recession but also have provided a measure of economic growth.

Indeed, in 1994 Armenia became the first former Soviet Republic to record economic growth. A tight credit policy has forced down the inflation rate from 30 per cent a month last year to 1 per cent in August. The currency, the Dram, is now one of the strongest in the region. Since mid-1994 a macroeconomic stabilization programme has been under way.

We have maintained a policy of fiscal and monetary responsibility to encourage the development of the private sector. We are also undertaking a mass privatization programme to transfer nearly all State-owned enterprises to private ownership. We believe that the private sector will be the engine of growth in Armenia and an important source of employment opportunity. We welcome the

participation of foreign investors in this process without restriction, and we have a completely open foreign trade policy.

Of course implementation of our economic policy has been hampered by the situation in the energy sector, which remains critical. Therefore, the only viable, effective short-term solution to Armenia's energy crisis is the restarting of the Metsamor Nuclear Power plant, which is under way.

Armenia, like other States in transition, is in the process of emerging from economic crisis and of laying the foundations for economic and social development. While States have the primary responsibility to achieve social and economic development, they cannot do so alone. They need the substantial support and encouragement of the international community. Multilateral and bilateral donors should coordinate their financing and planning procedures to improve the impact of their activity toward the achievement of the objectives of social development programmes of countries with economies in transition.

Given its universal membership and the unique and comprehensive mandate reflected in its Charter, the United Nations has a vital role to play in the development process, particularly in ensuring the implementation of development commitments in an integrated fashion. Hence, its relationship with the specialized agencies, funds, regional organizations and commissions, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization should be analysed with a view to enhancing effective action and coordination between them in the economic, social and related fields.

The commitment to the transformation of the centrally planned economy to a market economy is seen by the Government of Armenia as an integral part of the transition to a democratic State. In turn, a free-market economy will flourish in a stable democracy which promotes and underpins economic development. The success of a democracy requires informed and civil discourse and respect for the rule of law and for the democratic process, including the expression of the public view through free and fair elections.

Last July, Armenia held its first democratic parliamentary elections since its declared independence. Simultaneously, Armenians voted in a constitutional referendum on the first democratic institution in the history of Armenia. The Constitution was adopted and the liberal democratic forces gained an overwhelming majority in the new parliament, now renamed the National Assembly. International and local observers reported that the elections ran smoothly and were held in a free atmosphere. I should like to take this opportunity to express my Government's deep appreciation for the monitoring activities of the United Nations observers in the parliamentary elections and the constitutional referendum.

The convincing victory of the liberal democratic forces has guaranteed the continuation of the political and socio-economic policies pursued thus far by the Government, based on a clear programme and an achievable plan of development. The adoption of the Constitution is a decisive factor in the maintenance of the stability of Armenian statehood, as well as the legal guarantee for the development of a civic society and a market economy.

Development and human rights are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. There can be no genuine long-term development without respect for the full spectrum of the rights of individuals. Armenia strongly supports the efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Ayala Lasso. Member States must continue working toward better coordination within the Human Rights Centre and consolidation of human rights functions within the United Nations system. The United Nations should give priority to monitoring and prevention.

Armenia considers self-determination in its multitude of manifestations to be an inalienable human right. The conflict between the people of Nagorno Karabakh, who are striving for self-determination, and the Azerbaijani Government, which refuses to address the rights of the people of Nagorno Karabakh, continues to concern the Government of Armenia. The peaceful resolution of the conflict remains Armenia's top foreign policy priority.

Despite the maintenance of the cease-fire since May 1994, the conflict continues to threaten peace, stability and security in our region. The lack of any serious breakthrough in negotiations during this respite, the uncertainties surrounding the political process and the reluctance of the international community to seize the opportunity to act firmly and decisively make the 15-month-long cease-fire highly fragile. Indeed, the longer the cease-fire exists without any major developments, the more likely the resumption of military activity in the near future will become.

Since the last session of the General Assembly, important developments have taken place in the political process. Visible progress was made at the Summit meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) held in Budapest in December 1994, when an agreement was reached at the highest levels to combine the mediation efforts of the OSCE and Russia, and create a co-chairmanship to guide the peace process. The Summit also expressed readiness to establish a multinational OSCE peace-keeping operation to consolidate the existing cease-fire, make the peace process irreversible and open the way for the Minsk Conference.

Today, under Russian and Finn co-chairmanship, and with the participation of nine Minsk Group member States, the OSCE is actively pursuing the peace process through intensive negotiations. While these efforts have certainly yielded results, a demonstration of political will by the parties to the conflict and an added commitment by the international community are needed if a serious breakthrough is to be achieved.

As part of the step-by-step approach to the resolution of the conflict, the signing of the political agreement is critical for the consolidation of the cease-fire and for the overall settlement of the conflict. This political agreement, which is currently, during the Minsk Group negotiations, being discussed by the parties to the conflict, stipulates the deployment of the OSCE peace-keeping forces, the return of the occupied territories, the lifting of all blockades and the return of refugees.

The successful conclusion of this agreement depends mainly on a provision that provides local, regional and international security guarantees that will ensure the physical existence of the people of Nagorno Karabakh, and eliminate the possibility of the resumption of military activities. Such guarantees, along with standard security measures — deployment of OSCE peace-keepers, demilitarization of all evacuated territory, and so on — must also address Nagorno Karabakh's legitimate need, as an indispensable security element, of a corridor linking the enclave with the outside world.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses a grave threat to both global and regional security and stability. At the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the States parties undertook an in-depth and earnest review of the implementation of the Treaty and reached a decision for the Treaty to continue in force indefinitely. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to reiterate its satisfaction with this historic outcome. Armenia attaches great importance to the early conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty — and no later than 1996.

In recent years the United Nations has convened a series of global conferences. The important process of international gatherings has continued this year. The World Summit for Social Development brought together many strands that had previously been pursued separately. For the first time in history there was a political acknowledgment that the eradication of poverty must be the first priority of any society.

Within each of the United Nations global conferences, the advancement of women has been a major concern, and we have witnessed a number of considerable gains on women's issues. The Fourth Conference on Women, which has just concluded in Beijing, both reaffirms the commitments toward the advancement of women made in the previous conferences and builds upon their achievements.

The Platform of Action agreed upon at the Beijing Conference will lead to the creation of new machinery that will help countries integrate women's issues into national policy-making.

Virtually all Member States of the United Nations favour an increase in the membership of the Security Council reflecting the radical changes in the world and the increase in the Organization's overall membership. However, an increase in membership should not diminish the Council's efficiency. Meanwhile, the Security Council must continue working to improve its openness, transparency and communication with non-members. The Council should also be able to respond to emerging threats and disputes before their escalation into armed conflict.

There is a direct link between peace and security, on the one hand, and economic and social development, on the other. Therefore, radical reform of the Economic and Social Council is imperative. As a first step, strengthening of the Council's policy-setting role and coordination capability in operational activities for development is required. Together with improved coordination of United Nations organizations and agencies devoted to economic and social progress, a strengthened Economic and Social Council could better

assist the Security Council and advise it of potential emergencies arising out of economic and social conditions.

The issue of financial resources is fundamental. If Member States wish to have an effective world Organization to meet global challenges, they must pay their assessments, as they are legally committed to do. We are not indifferent to the financial situation of the United Nations, and I would like to assure the Assembly that my country will do its best to fulfil its obligations. However, the current assessment formulas no longer fully reflect global economic and political realities. The High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations was established by the Assembly in part in response to the necessity for revision of the assessment structure. The aim of a comprehensive financial reform must be to establish a transparent and reliable scale, reflective of Members' real capacity to pay, automatically adaptable to changed national circumstances and giving consideration to the needs of countries with low per capita incomes.

Let me conclude by wishing the General Assembly every success in the demanding work it faces during this session, and by pledging Armenia's most active and efficient cooperation with the delegations of other States as you, Sir, preside over our deliberations.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, His Excellency Mr. Jose Manuel Durão Barroso, on whom I now call.

Mr. Durão Barroso (Portugal) *(spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation):* It will doubtless be understood if, before beginning my statement, I express, as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, the particular satisfaction which I feel in seeing an illustrious fellow countryman, Professor Diogo Freitas do Amaral, an eminent public figure and a professor at my alma mater, the University of Lisbon, presiding over the work of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. Allow me to convey my warmest and fondest congratulations to you, Mr. President, and, at the same time, my gratitude to all Member States for the vote of confidence in Portugal that this represents.

I would also like to pay tribute to my colleague from Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Amara Essy, for the dedicated and competent manner in which he steered the work of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

To you, Mr. Secretary-General, I reaffirm my admiration for the way in which you have carried out your functions during a period in which the United Nations is increasingly called upon to intervene ever more actively in many fields of international life.

In his statement, my Spanish colleague has already set out, in the name of the 15 States of the European Union, certain positions which are also shared by Portugal. Nevertheless, I would like to refer to some matters which are of particular importance to my country.

Peace continues to be the primary objective of, and the biggest challenge faced by, the United Nations.

The proliferation of peace-keeping operations launched by the Security Council in recent years and the high levels of human and financial resources committed to them are indicative of the commitment and collective efforts of the United Nations system and its Member States.

The results achieved in some countries — and I am pleased to refer here to the case of the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) and the recent developments in the peace process in Angola — are reason enough to indicate that we should not reduce our level of commitment nor the scope of our activities. We should, however, also be flexible and creative, here as elsewhere, in order to avoid the rigidity of models and adapt peace-keeping operations to the specific conditions of each case.

While it is true that the United Nations must not abdicate its mission of helping to restore peace, we believe that we should focus our efforts, above all, on the prevention of conflicts.

The Agenda for Peace requires effective coordination of the various Departments and agencies of the United Nations system in order to provide an integrated view of the many factors which contribute to the development of crises. In the search for peace, the question of the complementarity between the United Nations and intergovernmental organizations of a regional nature is also particularly relevant.

With this in mind, Portugal has actively supported, since the beginning, the creation and implementation of the mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution established by the Organization of African

Unity (OAU) at the Cairo Summit in 1993. We have also participated in the search for the means which will permit the strengthening and efficacy of those instruments.

Along the same lines, while holding the presidency of the Western European Union (WEU) during the first half of this year, Portugal put the issue of conflict prevention on the agenda of that organization and focused the need for WEU to develop support mechanisms in this regard.

Also, in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), where preventive diplomacy is the foundation of its activities, Portugal has contributed so that the Organization can continue to have a decisive role to play in the maintenance of stability in a region which runs from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Alongside the security model for the twenty-first century, this will surely be one of the subjects that will receive in-depth treatment at the next OSCE Summit, which will take place in Lisbon at the end of next year.

With regard to disarmament, as another of the components of the efforts in favour of peace, Portugal welcomes the historic decision taken by consensus on 11 May this year in this very Hall to indefinitely extend the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Also encouraging is the progress obtained at the Disarmament Conference, especially with regard to the increased expectations of rapidly completing a comprehensive test ban Treaty.

The results of the high-level meeting, held last July, that resulted in donations towards a voluntary United Nations fund for de-mining should also be stressed here. In that context, Portugal announced that it would be making a bilateral contribution.

Equally, I welcome the negotiations currently under way in Vienna for the revision of the United Nations Convention on Conventional Weapons.

The enlargement of the Disarmament Conference is urgently required, keeping in mind the need for a strengthening of the negotiation of international legal instruments, as well as their observance by an increasing number of States.

There can be no peace in the world while large sections of the world's population continue to live beneath levels considered fundamental for human dignity. Integrated and sustainable development, focused on people, is therefore the other great challenge which cannot be separated from the search for peace. The Agenda for Development and the Agenda for Peace constitute a single unit — one makes no sense, nor can it be achieved, without the other.

In this context, it is necessary to recognize the need to revise the entire system of international development aid, and to reflect on the role that, in this area, should fall to the United Nations. Ours should be a global and coherent vision.

The integrated and sustainable development which we desire must be pursued on all fronts: at the economic level, to be sure, but also in the consolidation and deepening of democratic institutions; in the promotion of human rights across the board; in the increasing participation of women in the most diverse sectors of social and political life; in the defence of the rights of children, ethnic minorities and all underprivileged members of society; in humanitarian assistance; and in the protection of the environment.

To achieve all these goals, we must implement the decisions taken at major United Nations conferences, for it is at these conferences — those of Rio de Janeiro, Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing, as well as the forthcoming conference in Istanbul next year — that the "Agenda for Development" gradually takes shape.

Non-governmental organizations, as well as other groups through which the vitality of civil society is demonstrated, are privileged agents in aid and development, and are our partners in the "Agenda for Development". This is due to their particular capacity of penetration in the field, of making contact with the people and of understanding their real needs.

Of all areas of development, there are two in particular to which I would like now to turn: the protection and promotion of human rights, and the importance of the environment.

The protection and promotion of human rights is a constant priority of Portuguese foreign policy. We continue to believe in the importance of critical dialogue in order to reach the fundamental objective of respect for those rights, and we are following the activities of the High Commissioner and the Centre for Human Rights.

The fact that protection of the environment is inextricably linked to the notion of balanced development

has led it to gain an increasing relevancy in our foreign policy concerns. In this context, I wish to refer in particular to the oceans, especially with regard to the development of a balanced management of fish stocks and marine resources.

As Portugal's territory includes two archipelagos — the Azores and Madeira — I would like to stress our particular sensitivity to the problems faced by small island States in development and environmental issues.

Furthermore, I express my hope that the International Year of the Oceans, a Portuguese initiative adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, will provide an urgently needed opportunity for a full debate on these questions. We will strive in that direction and hope that the holding in the same year in Lisbon of Expo 98 — an exposition on that subject — will result in a fruitful coordination of these efforts.

The legislative activity of the United Nations in maintaining the ecological balance and the management of international waterways is of special importance. Portugal intends to follow with particular interest the work on this issue that is being undertaken by the International Law Commission. We hope that in the near future a convention on this matter will be adopted which would include international norms of responsibility — applicable under domestic or international jurisdiction.

In the context of an "agenda for development", I would like once again, to underline my personal conviction and the position of Portugal that Africa must quite obviously be one of the priorities of the international community. We were therefore pleased to welcome the announcement made by the Secretary-General in Lisbon concerning the launching of the "United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s".

The forthcoming conference for the Great Lakes region, convened under the sponsorship of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to address the tragic situation of a number of countries of that region, will certainly constitute a test of the true commitment of the international community to the African continent: a test of the capacity to identify the objectives of peace and development; a test of the much-needed complementarity between the United Nations and regional organizations.

Despite the persistence of disturbing cases of political and social instability in a number of countries of the continent, as well as, of course, the open conflicts and serious violations of human rights which still continue, it is only fair to recognize that in many African States significant steps have been taken towards the peaceful settlement of conflicts and the consolidation of the processes of political and social democratization.

I am pleased to be able to say that the majority of these processes were carried out under the aegis of the United Nations, and Portugal is proud to have actively participated in a number of them: in the international structures of support to the process of democratic transition in South Africa; in the negotiations which led to the Peace Accord in Mozambique, having been represented in all the commissions created by that Accord and in the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ); and as part of the troika of observers of the peace process in Angola.

With this process in mind, I hope that, following the meetings held at Lusaka, Franceville, and now Brussels, between the President of the Republic of Angola and the leader of UNITA, steps will continue to be taken towards a definitive reconciliation of the Angolan family while strictly complying with the Lusaka Protocol, which restores the spirit of the Bicesse Agreement signed in Portugal in 1991.

It is equally important, keeping in mind Security Council resolution 1008 (1995), Lusaka Protocol be adequately encouraged by the international community. I cannot fail, therefore, to express my concern over the delay in the deployment to Angola of all the forces and contingents of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III), where Portugal is already present with a communications and logistics unit, as well as a number of staff officers in the command structure and civilian, military and police observers.

The tragic human suffering and the terrible material destruction brought about by more than 20 years of conflict also require that the international community — following the round table on Angola being held in Brussels under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme — continues to respond generously to the humanitarian aid needs and the challenge of reconstructing the country, particularly in the areas of demining and the social reintegration of the displaced and the demobilized.

The New Agenda for Africa is pressing. It should lead to the promotion of vast integrated programmes of

development aid which would coordinate, in the most efficient manner possible, the resources of the international community. It should seek to support and encourage African countries to choose the path of peace, political democracy, stability and social justice, respect for human rights and economic development.

The strengthening of the ties which link Portugal to the five Portuguese speaking countries is and shall remain a constant goal of my country's foreign policy.

While talking of the ties that unite the countries that speak Portuguese, I wish to underline the importance of the meeting which, last July in Lisbon, brought together the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, and Sao Tome and Principe.

That meeting permitted the reaffirmation of purpose which motivates those respective Governments with regard to the institutionalization of the community of Portuguese speaking countries. We hope that this next year will witness the formalization of this community, which, to all intents and purposes, already exists in the hearts and souls of its peoples and has become more and more concrete in many ways.

At a time such as this, when we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and assessing its successes and its failures, we cannot but, unfortunately, include the question of East Timor among the latter.

The 20 years which have passed since the illegal occupation of East Timor and the denial of the exercise of the right to self-determination of its people, far from allowing the question to be forgotten and the status quo to be consolidated have, on the contrary, worsened the tensions and focused ever more strongly the attention of world public opinion.

The lesson of these last 20 years has been that force solves nothing in East Timor nor will it ever resolve anything. Without a solution which, in conformity with the Charter and international law, takes into account the legitimate rights of its people, including that of freely expressing themselves on their political future, there will be no peace or respect for human rights in East Timor.

I wish to reiterate here the commitment of Portugal towards finding, through peaceful and negotiated means, such a solution. With that aim in mind, we continue to cooperate with the Secretary-General in the process of dialogue which, under his auspices, we have maintained with Indonesia.

Despite the fundamental difference which continues to separate us on the core of the problem, we believe that the process of dialogue, with all its difficulties, registered very significant progress: representative Timorese personalities from various political sectors have now become associated with this process.

We have always held that the rights and primary interests at stake in this question are those of the Timorese people, and that their voice and their wishes will have to be heard in order for a solution to be found. I sincerely hope that this first step marks the beginning of a new, more positive and constructive phase of the process of dialogue concerning East Timor, one which will lead us more quickly to the end of this tragic situation.

I turn now to Europe. The situation in the former Yugoslavia continues to be a principal motive of concern. We are naturally encouraged by the results obtained at the Ministerial meeting held in Geneva on 8 September, congratulate the members of the Contact Group for obtaining those results and hope that the meeting being held here today in New York will drive the process forward. At any rate, the consolidation of the results still depends on keeping the international community united, on the cohesion of the Contact Group, and on close coordination of the initiatives and actions taken by international organizations. Portugal will continue to participate actively in these efforts and we shall maintain our presence on the ground while it remains useful and necessary.

In its relationship with Latin America, Portugal has, as is well known, very strong human, historical and cultural ties: with Brazil, for reasons known to all, but also with the other countries of Latin America, with which we are seeking an ever-closer relationship. Ties with Latin America will always occupy an important place in Portuguese foreign policy. This is made clear by our active participation in the Ibero-American Summits of Heads of State and Government.

We welcome the fact that Latin America is today clearly giving new value to its role in the international system. Portugal resolutely supports the projects for regional Latin American integration and, as a member of the European Union, favours the establishment of wide agreements with institutions of regional integration —

namely, the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUL) and other processes of integration under way on the American continent. I am referring also to the consolidation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the future establishment of a free-trade area in the Americas.

Portugal, both bilaterally and within the framework of a number of organizations such as the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Western European Union, has promoted the strengthening and deepening of ties with the countries of the Maghreb, a region of fundamental importance today for the security, stability and development of the entire Mediterranean area.

Therefore, a number of European Councils, beginning with that of Lisbon, have detailed new ideas and new instruments of partnership that relate to a number of areas and that will bring closer together the two shores of the Mediterranean; they will be decided upon at the forthcoming Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Barcelona in November.

Portugal continues to follow closely the progress reached in the Middle East peace process, especially as regards the negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. We must pay tribute here to the courage with which both sides have pursued the path of peace; they have frequently encountered obstacles — sometimes tragic ones — but they have not remained hostage to them. Proof of this is the important accord to be solemnly signed in Washington in just a few days. I hope that this atmosphere of dialogue will also be consolidated among the other parties.

Portugal, both within the European Union and bilaterally, has contributed to the assistance for the Palestinian people and for the support of its structures.

Turning to Asia, I must first mention with satisfaction that, as a result of the close cooperation between Portugal and China and in full respect for the joint declaration between those two countries, the process of Macau's transition continues to be carried out in a harmonious manner. The common objective of both countries in this process remains constant: to guarantee the stability and prosperity of that territory and the maintenance of its special characteristics, in the framework of the transfer of administration in December 1999.

Portugal recognizes the increasing importance that the Asian continent is assuming on the international stage. My country feels that it has profound historical and cultural ties to that region. In this context, my Government hopes that the meeting planned for next March in Bangkok will constitute a significant step towards an ever-more-open and wider dialogue on all questions of mutual interest to the European Union and Asia.

To achieve the fundamental and primary goals of peace and development, and to face the situations I have referred to, the Organization must undertake a realistic exercise of self- examination.

It is, above all, essential for the Organization to have a sound financial foundation. I do not believe I am exaggerating by stating that we are in the midst of a crisis that is without precedent and that, if not promptly and bravely addressed, will surely lead the Organization to rupture. At this point, two stages appear available to us in the search for a solution: strict payment in full and on time of our obligations; the need for corrections which will permit a reduction of expenses or their fairer distribution amongst us.

With regard to the first point, I cannot avoid criticizing the attempts to renege on commitments which have already been made, by consensus. How can an expense be adopted by consensus but its payment refused? What kind of credibility can then be expected in what concerns international commitments?

As to the second aspect, reforms are necessary that will reflect each State's capacity to pay and the alterations to that capacity. In this spirit, my Government, responding to an appeal made by the Secretary-General, took the initiative earlier this year to increase voluntarily its contributions to the peace-keeping budget. Thus we have moved from group C to group B on the scale of assessments. The decision will mean a five-fold increase in our initial contributions. We took this decision because we consider that it is a step in the right direction in what concerns the financial reform of the Organization. We took this decision to express our commitment to the importance and success of the work of this Organization. We took this decision because we knew this increase might benefit other countries that are experiencing temporary difficulties. We hope that our move will be followed by other States whose economic situation has, like Portugal's, improved in recent years.

It is not merely in the financial area that the United Nations must contemplate reform. Equally important is the reform of the Security Council, which must in the near future reflect the political, economic and

demographic realities of the contemporary world. In this context, an adequate and balanced representation of all regions of the world would confer on the Council greater efficacy in the formulation and implementation of its decisions and would make it the beneficiary of wide support from all Member States, which would, in this manner, feel duly represented on it. It is undoubtedly a complex process, an evolutionary one, in which differences remain profound and which will necessarily be based on a compromise solution.

I cannot conclude without reaffirming here the candidature of Portugal for one of the two non-permanent seats on the Security Council attributed to the Western European Group for the period 1996 through 1997. Our candidature is based on a number of reasons.

First, because we believe, as a country with a universalist nature accustomed to contact with all regions of the globe for more than five centuries and to understanding and accepting different cultures and civilizations, that we will be able to contribute to the search for solutions in strict compliance with the purposes and principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations.

Secondly, having been only once before a member of the Security Council, we understand that countries like Portugal have not only the right, but also the duty, to participate in that body more regularly.

In this context, I would like to underline here the situation of countries like Portugal — in fact, the majority of those represented here — that, based on democratic principles such as that of rotation, can, wish to, and should be able to, contribute to international peace and security. And this they can do in a particularly constructive manner, as, by not pursuing geo-strategic interests of hegemonic regional promotion or of any other type, they can, on the contrary, contribute by being accessible, available and moderate in the search for compromise solutions.

On the other hand, through our participation in peace-keeping operations, our voluntary increase of our financial contributions to the Organization, our participation in important United Nations organs, we consider that we are ready to carry out the role which we may be called upon to play.

We are ready to listen and not to impose. We place our trust in negotiation and not on pressure; we support what is fair and balanced, and do not consider any formula which does not seek to build bridges for the creation of consensus solutions.

In candidatures such as this, to achieve the goals set out, some are tempted to adopt attitudes which are of great visibility, but which are of a merely superficial nature. Others are tempted also to promise that which is quickly forgotten, or even to make commitments which in the end are unfulfilled.

On our part, we prefer to rely on the inherent merits of our candidature and, in this context, to actively pursue in a committed manner, the defence of our positions, ideas and proposals.

We believe, therefore, in the support and warm welcome that the candidature of Portugal for the Security Council will receive in the elections to take place during the next session of the General Assembly.

Next month we will celebrate at the highest level, in a solemn session, the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, which will provide an opportunity for reflection on the future of this Organization. Portugal hopes that a strengthened determination of all Member States will emerge to reaffirm the principles and values of the Charter and result in the better adaption of the Organization to the complex realities of international life today.

This is certainly a great challenge. New generations hope that we will be able to face these responsibilities.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.